



Overview

This humorous science-fiction play is set on a spaceship in the future. When the crew's rubbish-blasting machine stops working, they are intrigued to find out how people used to deal with their rubbish in the "old days".

"Space Rubbish" requires students to "confidently use a range of processing and comprehension strategies to make meaning from

and think critically about" text (from *The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 14). As well as providing an engaging reading experience and opportunities for expressive oral reading, this play can be used to explore ideas about recycling and caring for the environment.

There is a PDF of this text and an audio version as an MP3 file at www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz

Related texts

Humorous science-fiction stories or plays: "Saving Planet Stripe" (JJ 36); "I Spy" (JJ 50); "Zapped!" (JJs 52-55); "Professor Clever" (JJ 57)

Other humorous plays involving unlikely events and characters: "Landing a Job" (JJ 30); "Tricky Jack Rabbit" (JJ 31); "Fearless" (JJ 35); "Lucky Dip" (JJ 40); "Frog School" (JJ 41); "Invisible" (JJ 47); "Buried Treasure" (JJ 53); "Stop, Thief!" (JJ 55)

Texts with ideas about recycling and caring for the environment: "Our Recycled Worm Farm" (JJ 40); "Making Paper" (JJ 44); "The Plastic-free Challenge" and "Plastic Planet" (SJ L2 Nov 2018)

Text characteristics

"Space Rubbish" includes the following features that help develop the reading behaviours expected at Gold.

The structure of the text as a play, which relies on dialogue and stage directions to tell the story and develop characterisation

The print conventions of a play, for example, upper-case letters for character names and italics for stage directions

A mix of explicit and implicit content that requires students to make connections between information in the play and their prior knowledge to make predictions and inferences

The underlying ideas about recycling

Several characters and events and shifts in time

Space Rubbish
by Kylie Parry

COMPUTER
ALIEN 1
ALIEN 2
CAPTAIN
FIRST OFFICER
SECOND OFFICER
ENGINEER

SCENE ONE: Inside a spaceship. The CAPTAIN, FIRST OFFICER, and SECOND OFFICER are standing round a pile of rubbish.

CAPTAIN. The rubbish pile is getting big again. It's time to use the rubbish blaster.

FIRST OFFICER. I love rubbish-blasting day.

SECOND OFFICER. Yeah, me too! It's great to get rid of all that revolting rubbish!

The ENGINEER comes in wheeling a machine with a big switch on the side.

CAPTAIN. OK, load in the rubbish.
They load the rubbish into the machine.

CAPTAIN. Now, blast away!

SECOND OFFICER (pulling the switch down). Take that, stinky rubbish!
Nothing happens.

SECOND OFFICER. Uh-oh.

FIRST OFFICER. What's happening?

CAPTAIN. Nothing. That's what's happening.

ENGINEER. Here, let me try.
He pulls the switch again. Nothing happens.

Language features that enable students to apply and extend their vocabulary knowledge, for example:

- the hyphenated descriptive phrases – "rubbish-blasting day", "rubbish-eating aliens"
- "wove" as the past-tense verb form of "weave"
- the prefixes in "bicycles", "recycling", "recycled", "reappears", "intercom"

The science fiction context, which may be unfamiliar to some students

A variety of sentence structures, including adverbial phrases within the stage directions (for example, "pulling the switch down", "looking embarrassed", "sounding puzzled") requiring students to attend to punctuation and linking words and phrases to clarify the connections between ideas

Some words and phrases that may be unfamiliar, including descriptive vocabulary and vocabulary associated with space fiction ("captain", "officer", "engineer", "alien", "blaster", "rubbish-blasting", "revolting", "wheeling", "machine", "Uh-oh", "batteries", "sternly", "embarrassed", "volunteer", "rubbish-eating", "invented", "puzzled", "compost", "labelled", "wove", "Attention", "approaching", "on board", "alongside", "intercom", "offstage", "airlock", "Greetings", "starving") the meaning of which is supported by the context, the sentence structure, and/or the illustrations

Cross-curriculum links

English (Reading)

Level 2 – Processes and strategies: Selects and reads texts for enjoyment and personal fulfilment.

Level 2 – Language features: Shows some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

The Arts (Drama)

Level 2 – Developing practical knowledge: Explore and use elements of drama for different purposes.



The New Zealand Curriculum

Suggested reading purposes

Possible learning goals

What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?

- To find out what the characters are going to do about their space rubbish
- To think about the underlying ideas in this play
- To find clues in this play to help read it to an audience

What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically” about texts?

The goals listed below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. **Select from and adapt** them according to your students’ strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students, over several readings, to:

- **make connections** between their prior knowledge and information in the play to **make predictions and inferences**
- identify and track events and ideas (**summarise**)
- **make inferences** about how the characters might act and speak
- identify and discuss some aspects that make this play funny (**analyse**)
- **form an opinion** about the author’s purpose
- **monitor** their reading and, when something is unclear, take action to solve the problem, for example, by checking further sources of information, rereading a sentence, or looking for clues close by.



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Sounds and Words

Introducing the text

A short video on the importance of introducing the text is available at <https://vimeo.com/142446572>

Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that your introduction to the text is effective in activating their prior knowledge and providing appropriate support for a successful first reading. **Select from and adapt** the following suggestions.

For English language learners, you could discuss the title, the illustrations, and the list of characters before the whole group session to build confidence and provide support with vocabulary and text features that may be unfamiliar. You can find further information about features of texts that may need support at [The English Language Learning Progressions \(ELLP\)](#).

- Expect the students to infer from the text layout that this is a play and to predict, from the style of the illustrations, that it is humorous. Remind them that a play is a story told mostly through dialogue. Briefly review their understanding of the features of a play, including the character names (in capital letters) that show who is speaking and the stage directions (in italics) that give extra information.

- Read the list of characters (including the Engineer on page 27) and the Scene One stage directions together and discuss the setting on a spaceship. You could introduce the term “science fiction” here, and briefly explain that science fiction involves stories (or plays) about an imaginary world, often set in the future and in space, based on ideas about science and technology. Encourage the students to make connections to other examples from books, games, TV, or films.
- Prompt the students to make predictions about what the characters are planning to do with their space rubbish.
- Together, set a reading purpose. Share the learning goal(s). Explain that you want the students to read the whole play themselves before they are assigned individual roles. Remind them that this is a humorous play and to expect silly things to happen.
- Provide sticky notes for the students to record any questions or ideas they have as they are reading or to mark aspects, including unfamiliar vocabulary, that they might want to return to later.

Reading the text

Observe the students as they read the whole play by themselves, noting their confidence and perseverance. During the first reading, the focus is on students experiencing and enjoying the storyline rather than on totally accurate word-solving. At this level, much of the processing that they do is “inside their heads” and may not be obvious until the discussion after the reading. Intervene only if it’s clear a student needs help. There will be many opportunities to provide support with word-solving and comprehension on subsequent readings.

Student behaviours

Examples of the sorts of behaviours (developed over several readings) that will help students achieve their learning goal(s)

The students use information in the text and illustrations to identify and track events.

- They use the character names and information in italics to track who is speaking and what they are doing.
- They use the text on pages 26–27 to identify the problem the characters are facing.
- They track the pattern of suggestions and responses on page 29.
- On page 30, they keep in mind the reference in line one to “people” from “the old days” to clarify that these are the people the computer is referring to when it says “they”.
- They notice the three stars at the end of page 30 to indicate the end of this phase of the play (Scene One) and on page 31, they notice the illustration and key words in the stage directions (“Scene Two”, “reappears”, “things they have made”) to confirm that there has been a significant shift in time.

The students make connections between their prior knowledge and information in the play to make predictions and inferences.

- They use clues on pages 26–27 (for example, the page 26 illustration of the rubbish, adjectives such as “revolting” and “stinky”, the comment “Uh oh”, and the page 29 information about not being able to replace the batteries for two months, to infer that the breakdown of the rubbish-blasting machine is a huge problem for the characters.

- They use their awareness that this is a humorous play (and the inclusion of the aliens in the character list) to predict, at the end of page 29, that the captain is wrong and that “rubbish-eating aliens” are going to be important in the play.
- They use the reference on page 30 to “the old days” to infer (or confirm) that the play is set in the future.
- They draw on their knowledge of the words “bicycle” or “cycle” (on page 30) to visualise the joke about the captain confusing recycling with riding a bicycle.
- The students predict from the reactions of the First Officer, Captain, and Engineer to the computer’s suggestions and their own knowledge of narrative structure that the characters will try some of the ideas described by the computer.

The students demonstrate self-monitoring and problem solving.

- They use a range of strategies to clarify the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases, such as:
 - reading on to find out what S.L.P. means
 - using clues such as “alongside”, the captain speaking into the intercom, the computer opening the airlock, and the fact that the aliens “walk in” to clarify the meaning of “offstage”.
- They mark words or phrases they are not sure of or that they want to come back to.

Deliberate acts of teaching

How you can support individual students (if needed)

- Remind the students to note things they are not sure about or that are of particular interest.
- If necessary, explain how the phrases in italics by the characters’ names add information about what the characters are doing or how they are feeling while they are speaking.
- Remind the students of strategies they can use for solving unfamiliar words (for example, looking for the biggest known word “chunk” and applying their knowledge of letters, sounds, and word structure) and for clarifying meaning (rereading or reading on, and referring to the illustrations and stage directions). If necessary, provide support with specific words, for example, reminding them that “ch” can have a “sh” sound to help them solve “machine” or reassuring them about “wove” as the past-tense form of “weave”.

Discussing and rereading the text

You can revisit this text several times, focusing on different aspects and providing opportunities for the students to build comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. **Select from and adapt** the following suggestions according to your students’ needs and responses to the reading. Some of the suggestions overlap, and several can be explored further as after-reading activities.

 For some suggestions, you may find it helpful to project the PDF of the article so that you can zoom in on relevant sections.

- Enjoy the students’ responses to the play. Discuss some ways the writer and illustrator have made the play funny for example: the odd items in the illustrations of the rubbish; the First Officer being forgetful about such an important thing as the batteries; the idea of the characters knowing how to run a spaceship but not knowing about recycling and thinking that it’s “a bit crazy”; the concept of rubbish-eating aliens (and the captain being wrong about them); and the joke about cycling and recycling. (You may need to explain this play on words for English language learners.)
- Encourage the students to think critically:
 - *Are there other ways the characters could have solved the problem of having to get rid of so much rubbish?*
 - *What are some problems that could be caused in the real world by, for example, throwing rubbish away or sending it into space instead of recycling?*
 - *Could it be true that, in the future, people won’t know about recycling?*
 - *Do you think the author has a message for readers?*

- Have the students reread the play, stopping to discuss points of interest, including aspects they have marked with sticky notes. You could also explore such aspects as:

- predictions or inferences the students made as they were reading. *What clues did you notice?*
- the connections between ideas. You could create a chart to help the students organise their thinking, for example, about the suggested solutions and responses on page 29. (The students could complete it as an after-reading activity.)


Ideas about getting rid of the rubbish (page 29)	Why/Why not	
	<i>In the play</i>	<i>What we think of the ideas</i>
Blast it		
Throw it into space		
Store it		
Rubbish-eating aliens		

- clues in the text and illustrations about how the characters might act and speak. Have the students read the play aloud, taking the roles of the different characters. Encourage the students to act out the stage directions next to the characters' names (for example, "looking closely at the machine", "looking sternly", "sounding puzzled"). Clarify that these show what the characters are doing and how they are feeling (and speaking) but are not meant to be read aloud.
- the vocabulary associated with space, drawing on students' knowledge from stories and film as well as factual information. You could create a word map, using headings such as "space creatures", "parts of a spaceship", "words people say", and "spaceship crew". Encourage the students to add other "space" words they know.
- other descriptive words and phrases, such as "rubbish-blasting day", "revolting", "Uh-oh", "sternly", "embarrassed", "puzzled", "crush", "labelled", "wove", "starving", and the acronym "S.L.P." Reread the sections where the words occur to clarify their meanings. Prompt the students to make connections to other acronyms they know (for example, PE, NZ, IT, SPCA) and enjoy making up other examples based on ideas in the play, for example, FO – First Officer, RBD – Rubbish-blasting Day.
- how the students worked out (or tried to work out) unfamiliar words or phrases. You could draw attention to interesting word features, such as:
 - "wove" as the past-tense verb form of "weave"
 - the impact of the meaning of the prefixes in "bicycles", "recycling", "recycled", "reappears", and "intercom".

After reading: Practice and reinforcement

After-reading tasks should arise from your monitoring of the students' needs during the lesson and provide purposeful practice and reinforcement. Where possible, make links to other texts, including texts generated by the students, and to the wider literacy programme (for example, oral language, writing, handwriting, and word games and activities) and other curriculum areas. **Select from and adapt** these suggestions, according to the needs of your students.

For English language learners, *Supporting English Language Learners in Primary School (SELLIPS)* also has ideas for purposeful and relevant tasks.

- Provide many opportunities for students to reread this play and to read other humorous plays or stories (see Related texts).
- The students can build their comprehension and fluency by rereading the play while listening to the audio version, which provides a model of how readers can interpret and perform a play for an audience. Audio versions are particularly supportive for English language learners because, as well as clarifying pronunciation, they provide good models of the prosodic features of English, such as intonation, stress, and phrasing.
- Have the students reread the play aloud, taking the roles of different characters. They could also prepare costumes and props to practise and perform the play for others. Rereading plays is of particular benefit to English language learners because, as with the audio version, it provides opportunities to learn about and practise the prosodic features of English.
 -  The students could record their reading of the play on a phone or tablet.
- Ask the students to draw and label before and after pictures of the items the characters recycled. Alternatively, they could work with a partner to create an illustrated list of things the characters could have done with other items in the illustrations.
- The students could work in pairs to complete the chart about page 29. They could add a new column with their own suggestions. You could also have them add a labelled picture of what could have happened if the characters had chosen to go ahead with one of the suggestions.
- Support the students to explore the differences between recycling (where items are broken down into their components or raw materials to create something new) and reusing (where items are used in ways not originally intended) and find examples of each one in the play. Alternatively, they could draw and write about what they and their families do to reuse and recycle.
- Build vocabulary and make links to writing by having the students use the descriptive language in the play. For example, they could:
 - use the examples "rubbish-blasting" and "rubbish-eating" as models to create more examples of hyphenated descriptive phrases, for example, "crazy-sounding", "hard-hearted", "bad-tasting"
 - find examples of common acronyms. Alternatively, they could create their own humorous examples
 - illustrate a favourite scene and add descriptive words, phrases, or sentences from the play as well as ideas of their own.
- Build the students' confidence in reading and writing complex sentences by using the adverbial phrases in the stage directions to create complex sentences (for example: "Take that, stinky rubbish!" said the Second Officer, pulling the switch down). Create a few examples together, then have the students work in pairs to create their own sentences.